

## LESSON PLAN: *BREAKING NEWS!* EXPEDITION EDITION

With a focus on unbiased reporting, this activity is designed to encourage students to critically and thoughtfully approach historical events. Students will be tasked with reviewing multiple sources of information and reporting on key aspects of a historical event. Student's reporting will be recorded and critiqued for interest, accuracy and delivery.

### **Common Core State Standards Addressed**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.6-8.2** Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6** Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

### **Sunshine State Standards Addressed**

**SS.8.A.1.4:** Differentiate fact from opinion, utilize appropriate historical research and fiction/nonfiction support materials.

**SS.8.A.1.5:** Identify, within both primary and secondary sources, the author, audience, format, and purpose of significant historical documents.

**SS.8.A.1.7:** View historic events through the eyes of those who were there as shown in their art, writings, music, and artifacts.

Prior to the lesson, students will be given an opportunity to read the De Soto National Memorial Expedition Background (provided), watch the First Encounters field trip 22-minute video on the De Soto Expedition and/or review excerpts from the writings of Rodrigo Rangel, Hernando De Soto's private secretary, available at <http://floridahistory.com/rangel-1.html>

# Procedures

1. As a group, students will be instructed on the differences between fact and opinion. A teacher led discussion addressing some differences through examples and experiences is encouraged. The discussion should then segue into how news or current events reported with bias or opinion can change the way facts are perceived.
2. Students will then read the De Soto National Memorial Expedition Background, watch the First Encounters field trip 22-minute video on the De Soto Expedition and review teacher selected excerpts from the writings of Rodrigo Rangel. During this period, students will be encouraged to answer the journalistic 5 W's/1 H : Who, What, Where, When, Why and How?
3. Review the events of the expedition with students and determine the specific events most interesting to the students. Remind students that they will only be using facts that they have garnered from the sources and will be expected to link each statement in their broadcast to a source.
4. Divide the students into small groups to cover major events in the timeline of De Soto's expedition. Assign roles: camera crew, director, reporter, newscaster, etc. Set a 1-2 minute time limit, requiring students to address the 5W/1H as efficiently as possible.
5. Allow groups to record their "breaking news" on the different events during De Soto's expedition. When all groups have completed, view the collected videos and critique each on the accuracy of facts presented, interest of the audience and delivery.
6. As a follow-up activity, ask the students to write a short essay that identifies the three stated aims of De Soto's expedition, describe the native peoples De Soto encountered and the results of the contact. The conclusion of the essay should compare the goals of DeSoto's expedition with the end results.

## Hernando De Soto Expedition Background

In the early 1500's, the growing nation of Spain had few industries and resources to rely on, and yet was the wealthiest nation in Europe and the most powerful nation abroad. The Spanish domain extended from the West Indies through Central and South America. These new territories had tremendous natural resources of gold, silver, emeralds, and dyestuffs. A class of professional soldiers that is now referred to as *Conquistadors* emerged with the conquest of these New World territories.

With the choice of being poor in Spain or gaining riches in the New World, men were eager to enlist with the armies of conquest bound for the New World with the promise of fame and fortune. These were men like Hernán Cortés conqueror of the *Aztec Empire* (1519-1523), Francisco Pizarro conqueror of the *Inca Empire* (1526-1535), Juan Ponce de Leon discoverer of *La Florida* (1513), and of course, Hernando de Soto. (The name de Soto is literally translated as “of Soto” and there are many spelling variations: deSoto, de Soto, DeSoto).

Hernando de Soto was only about 14 years old when he first set sail from Spain, in about 1514. His time spent fighting off both Spanish poachers and native peoples of Panama and Nicaragua left the young conquistador with riches and a thirst for gold. This was soon quenched when he joined Francisco Pizarro in his famous conquest of the Inca Empire in Peru. In the late 1530's, now rich but growing bored, de Soto pressured the King to allow him to lead his own expedition into the heart of what is now the Southeastern United States. In exchange for De Soto personally financing the trip, King Charles V granted him both the governor-ship of Cuba, as well as ruler over the lands and peoples of La Florida, which included all of North America!

In June 1538, de Soto arrived in Cuba with 622 soldiers. There he purchased slaves (the expedition needed porters) and recruited camp followers (including a handful of women), artisans, priests, an engineer, 200 horses, a herd of pigs, and fierce war dogs.

On May 30, 1539, de Soto and his army arrived in Tampa Bay. In July 1539 de Soto left a temporary base of 100 men and supplies at Camp Ucita, and began his expedition to the interior of la Florida. Soon after, Juan Ortiz presented himself to de Soto. Juan Ortiz was a survivor from an earlier Spanish expedition and had been living among the Indians in the area for several years. Glad to be back among his own countrymen, he offered his services to de Soto and became invaluable as the expedition's interpreter.

Early on in the march, Hernando de Soto's army became dependent on the Native Americans for food. When chiefdoms he encountered had little to give, de Soto's army took it by force, often enslaving the natives to help carry supplies to their next destination. Hungry and impatient for gold, they took any native guides that they thought were misleading them and threw them to the war dogs.

Although they passed through many areas that would have been suitable for a colony, de Soto insisted they continue searching for gold. At Cofitachequi, Hernando de Soto records meeting a female chief who welcomed his army and gave him fresh water pearls. But de Soto was convinced there were even wealthier chiefdoms to be found, and he pushed his army on. After the battle of Mabila in 1540, where 22 of his men were killed and many of his supplies were lost, Hernando de Soto refused to meet a supply fleet anchored at present-day Pensacola Bay, afraid his soldiers would desert him and return to Spain.

Native Americans inflicted even greater damage at Chicasa, where de Soto lost more soldiers, as well as horses, pigs, clothing, weapons, and food. In May of 1542, de Soto died of fever and was buried in the Mississippi River. The expedition died with him. His successor, Luis de Moscoso, made an attempt to reach Mexico by land, but turned back. In the summer of 1543, the survivors built boats and abandoned over 500 of their Indian slaves in alien country. They sailed down the Mississippi River and reached the safety of Panuco, Mexico in September.

The Entrada was deemed a failure by the crown. No colonies or trade routes were established. No gold or riches were found. Over half of de Soto's men were killed during the four-year mission. The unintended legacy of the expedition was the information recorded by the survivors relating their adventures and encounters with the Native peoples in the rich lands of the American Southeast. More importantly, it was devastating to the native peoples of the Southeast. Thousands of Native Americans had been slaughtered by de Soto's troops. Many more would die of European diseases (such as smallpox, plague and influenza) for which they had no immunity. This caused the social, political and religious traditions of these peoples to crumble, forever changing the face of North America.